



# WEST VIRGINIA INTEGRATED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

## The Drug Endangered Family's Road to Resilience: BEYOND THE TRAUMA

*Pamela Toohey, CEO Birth Parent Association*

# BIRTH PARENT ASSOCIATION

## A Parent Partnering Program

- Our mission is to provide education and support services to at risk parents; helping them to minimize out of home placements, advocate for expedient reunification, and heal from the traumatic experiences that affected their families.



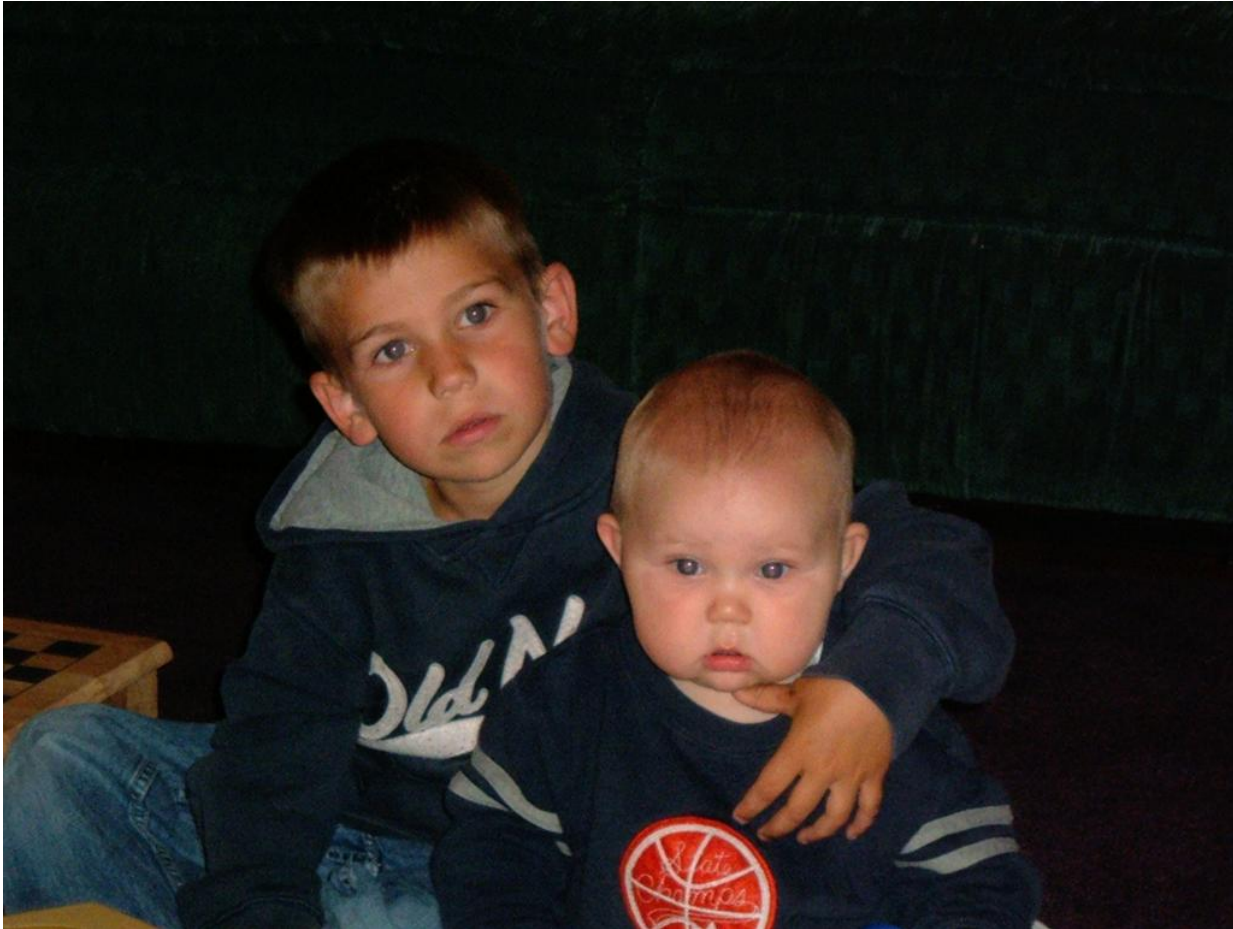
# BIRTH PARENT ASSOCIATION

[www.birthparentassociation.com](http://www.birthparentassociation.com)

- Parent to Parent or Peer to Peer Partners, and One-on-One Support
- Weekly Parent Partner Support Groups for at risk parents involved with Child Welfare Services
- Resources & Referrals for: substance abuse, domestic violence, anger management, parenting classes, shelter, child visitation, counseling or therapy, and other community services
- 24 Hour Message Center: (619) 277-7909



All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Leo Tolstoy



# Meet Misty and her son Trevor



**THIS IS THEIR STORY...**



# Case Example: Trevor and Misty

- MISTY: 43 years old, 5'8" and 98lbs, incoherent, angry and defiant, appeared to be illiterate
- Incarcerated for possession of meth and being under the influence and charged with child endangerment and neglect
- CW investigation revealed history of domestic violence, three older children (unable to locate); Misty's father and step-mother and Trevor's Paternal Grandmother unwilling to help, support or care for Trevor
- CW recommended inpatient drug treatment for Misty and out of home care for Trevor

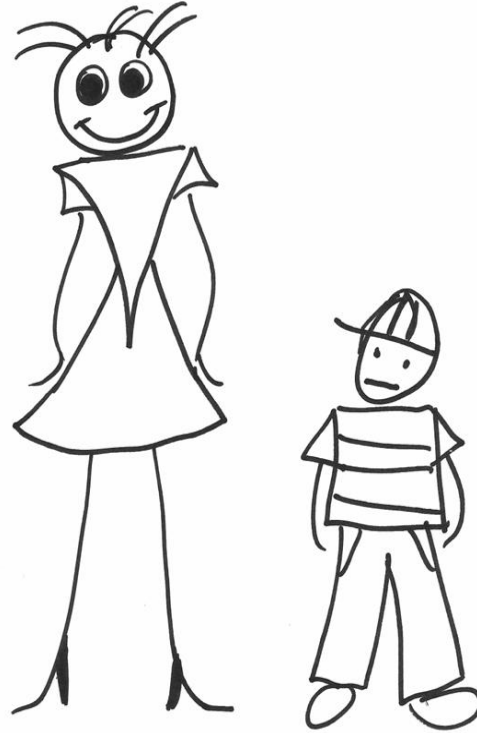


# Case Example: Trevor and Misty

- TREVOR: age 3.5 years, physically on track but appears to have developmental delays (not speaking, not potty trained), fearful and withdrawn, prefers to play alone
- Three prior child welfare reports of suspected child neglect and parental substance abuse (Unfounded; services offered)
- Removed due to child endangerment and neglect as a result of mother's drug use and suspected sales
- Trevor witnessed Mom being handcuffed, screaming, and placed into police car
- Trevor was taken to sheriff's station, where he remained for 6 hours before transported to emergency shelter
- Trevor placed in foster home 3 weeks later – no contact with Mom for almost 6 weeks



# Trevor & Misty



# Healthy Attachment Cycle



# Disturbed Attachment Cycle



# How do we feel about Misty

- Sad
- Want to help her
- Where are her parents or siblings? Where's her support?
- Confused
- How come they didn't take the child away before now?
- Disgusted
- Mad
- \*%!#\*%!#!!!!
- Could care less about what happens to her - what about the kid?
- Lock her up
- She shouldn't get him back

What does it take  
to  
make change?



# What does it take for us to make changes happen?

- Hope
- Faith
- Prayer
- Money
- Perseverance
- Resources
- Guidance
- Maintenance
- Education
- Planning
- Endurance
- Transportation
- Flexibility
- Belief
- Courage
- Spirit



# Misty's Story: What CW Did Not Know

- Military family; 23 moves in 16 years
- Childhood traumas included: intergenerational family alcoholism and mental illness; family violence; emotional, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse
- Isolation - no family connections or positive role models
- Adolescence – promiscuity, alcohol and substance use and deviant behavior
- 15-17 years: rape, miscarriage, forced termination of second pregnancy
- 18-27 years: 3 children; dysfunctional marriage; emotional, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; family violence and animal abuse
- Age 27: Misty's mom murdered by her domestic partner
- Divorced at 31; alcohol and substance abuse; homelessness and eating out of dumpsters; rapes and prostitution; panhandling and shoplifting; drug manufacturing, sales and distribution; mail and bank fraud; and more trauma



# What helped the family to begin change?

- Professional Team
- Services



For most people, connection holds the promise of comfort. For the victim of childhood abuse, it holds the certainty of danger, and the threat of utter destruction.

To allow oneself to be vulnerable would be foolish having learned all too well the predatory nature of humans from those early teachers.

Like a shark smelling blood, their perpetrators moved in time and again for the kill, so if now as adults they bleed, they bleed secretly.



I write this to remind us all of the mine field our clients have had to walk through to make it to our door. By then, how tenuous – how almost non-existent must be their ability to believe they will be met with kindness or respect.

Yet, who is more deserving of our deepest respect than one who has endured a holocaust where a childhood should have been, and lived to speak the truth of it and somehow mustered the courage to hope, against all odds, that it could one day be different?



MISTY & TREVOR

# THEN AND NOW











**Why is this  
important?**



Simply removing a child from a dangerous environment will not by itself undo the serious consequences or reverse the negative impacts of early fear learning. There is no doubt that children in harm's way should be removed from a dangerous situation. However, simply moving a child out of immediate danger does not in itself reverse Simply removing a child from a dangerous environment will not by itself undo the serious consequences or reverse the negative impacts of early fear learning. There is no doubt that children in harm's way should be removed from a dangerous situation. However, simply moving a child out of immediate danger does not in itself reverse or eliminate the way that he or she has learned to be fearful. The child's memory retains those learned links, and such thoughts and memories are sufficient to elicit ongoing fear and make a child anxious or eliminate the way that he or she has learned to be fearful.



# Types of Traumatic Stress

- **Acute trauma** is a single traumatic event that is limited in time.
- **Chronic trauma** refers to the experience of multiple traumatic events.
- **Complex trauma** describes both exposure to chronic trauma—usually caused by adults entrusted with the child's care—and the impact of such exposure on the child.



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## In your first 18 years of life:

Did your parent or caregiver often or very often...

- Swear at you, put you down, humiliate you or made you afraid you might be hurt?
- Push, grab, slap or throw things at you or hit you so hard you had bruises or got hurt?
- Touch or fondle you, have you touch them or attempt to have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you (5 years older)?

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## In your first 18 years of life:

Did you often or very often feel that...

- You weren't loved, important, special or your family didn't look out for, feel close to or support each other?
- You didn't have enough food, clean clothes and no one to protect you or your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or get you to a doctor if needed?

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## In your first 18 years of life:

Were your parents ever separated or divorced?

- Was your mother or stepmother often pushed, grabbed, slapped, had things thrown at her, kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit repeatedly or threatened with a gun or knife?
- Did you live with a problem drinker, an alcoholic or substance abuser?
- Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
- Did a household member go to prison?

# The ACE Score

The ACE Study used a simple scoring method:

- Exposure to one category ☐ (not incident) of ACE, qualifies as one point
- When the points are added up, the ACE Score is achieved
- An ACE Score of 10 would mean that the person reported exposure to all of the categories of trauma listed above.

# Some Trauma Comes at the Hands of the Good Guys



# Experience Grows the Brain

- Brain development happens from the bottom up:
- From primitive (basic survival)
- To more complex (rational thought, planning, abstract thinking)



# Experience Grows the Brain

## Frontal Lobe

Planning and judgment, thinking & reasoning and impulse control

## Orbitofrontal Region

Regulates emotions & emotionally communicate with others

Parenting from the Inside Out  
Author: Daniel Siegel, Mary Hartzell



# Effects of Trauma Exposure

## Attachment:

- World is uncertain and unpredictable.
- Socially isolated.
- Difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.

## Biology:

- Problems with movement and sensation.
- Hypersensitivity to physical contact
- Insensitivity to pain.
- Unexplained physical symptoms.
- Increased medical problems.

## Mood Regulation:

- Difficulty regulating their emotions.
- Difficulty knowing and describing their feelings and internal states.



# Effects of Trauma Exposure

## Dissociation:

- Feeling of detachment or depersonalization
- “observing” something happening to them that is unreal.

## Behavioral Control:

- Poor impulse control.
- Self-destructive behavior.
- Aggression towards others.

## Cognition:

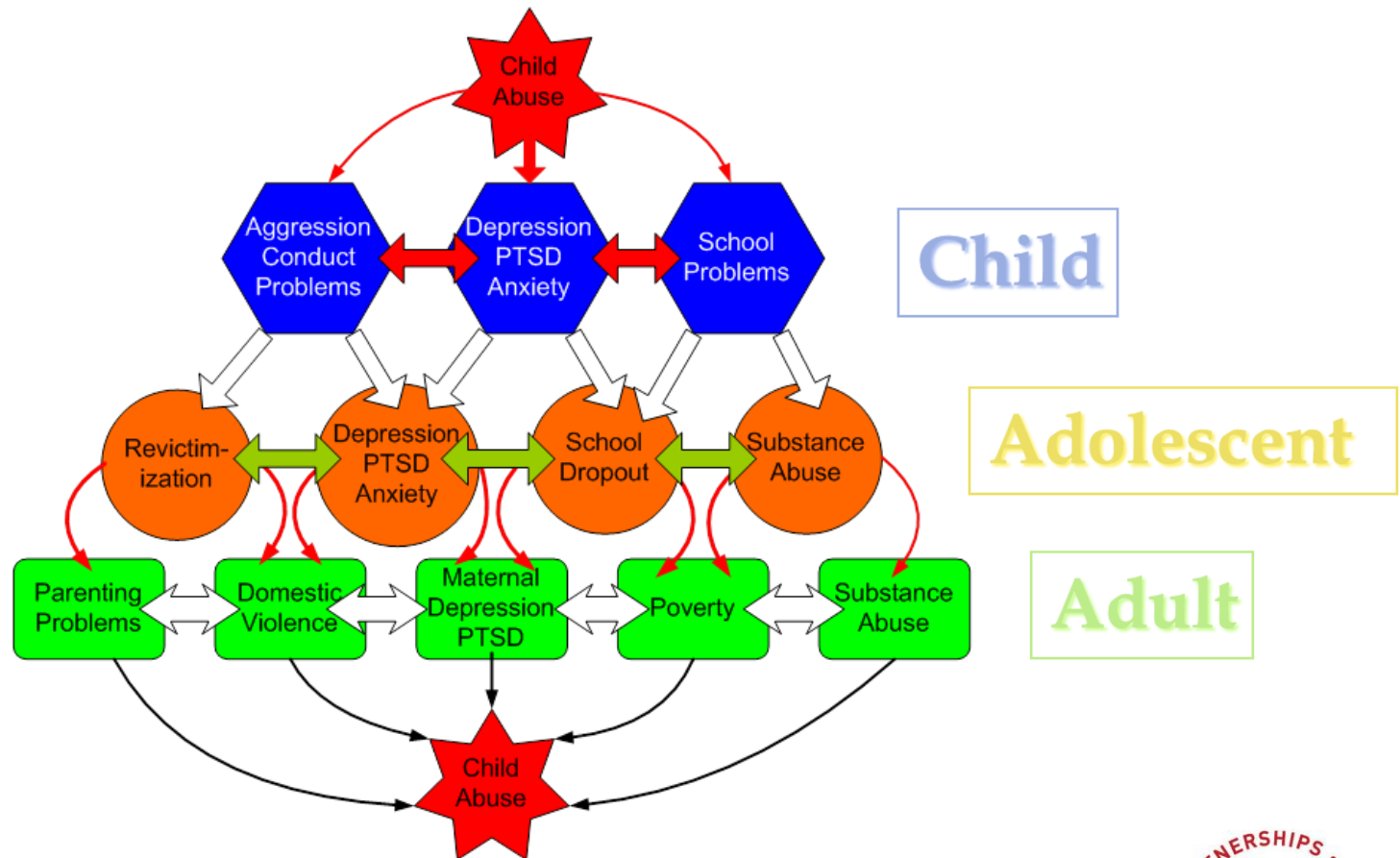
- Problems focusing on and completing tasks.
- Problems planning for and anticipating future events.
- Learning difficulties.
- Problems with language development.

## Self-Concept:

- Disturbed body image.
- Low self-esteem.
- Shame.
- Guilt.



# Developmental Cascade of Transgenerational Child Maltreatment Risk



-- F. Putnam, '08

OhioCanDo4Kids.Org



# Looking Through a Trauma Lens

**Establishing a**



**CHILD SERVING SYSTEM**

Adapted from: "Evidence-Based and Trauma Informed Practice in Child Welfare" Presented by Charles Wilson, MSSW, Senior Director Chadwick Center for Children and Families/Rady Children's Hospital and Pamela Toohey, CEO Birth Parent Association





**Stop asking...**  
**“What’s wrong with you?”**  
**And start asking...**  
**“What happened to you?”**



# Resources

- [www.cebc4cw.org](http://www.cebc4cw.org) Online evidence-based practice resource designed for child welfare professionals - with support from California Department of Social Services
- [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org) and <http://learn.nctsn.org> National Child Traumatic Stress Network, includes NCTSN Learning Center for Child and Adolescent Trauma
- [www.ChadwickCenter.org](http://www.ChadwickCenter.org) Chadwick Center for Children and Families



# Resources

- [www.birthparentassociation.com](http://www.birthparentassociation.com)  
Birth Parent Support & Education
- [www.acestudy.org](http://www.acestudy.org) Adverse Childhood Experiences Dr. Vincent Felitti
- [www.musc.edu/tfcbt/](http://www.musc.edu/tfcbt/) TF-CBT on-line training
- [www.parentinginsideout.org](http://www.parentinginsideout.org) Parenting From the Inside Out Daniel Siegel & Mary Hartzell



# Chadwick Trauma Informed Systems Project Products

[www.ctisp.org](http://www.ctisp.org)

- Administrator's Guide for Trauma-Informed Child Welfare
- Desk Guide on Trauma-Informed Services for Child Welfare Supervisors
- Desk Guide on Trauma-Informed Child Welfare for Mental Health
- Trauma-Informed Casework Practice Model Adaptation Guidelines
- Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Toolkit

